United States Department of the Interior **Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form



See instructions in How to Complete National Register Forms

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| 1. Na | ame | | | | | |
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| and/or com | mon LaMott Histor | ic Dist | rict | | | |
| | cation | | | | | |
| street & nui | mber Cheltenham Av | e, Grah | am Lane, l | Penrose A | Ave, Dennis St. | N/A not for publication |
| city, town | Cheltenham Towns | ship | N/A vic | inity of | congressional distric | ct |
| state | Pennsylvania | code | 42 | county | Montgomery | code 091 |
| 3. CI | assificatio | n | | | | |
| Category — district — buildin — structu — site — object | g(s) x private | | Status occupie unoccu work in Accessible yes: res x yes: un no | pied progress stricted | Present Use agriculture commercial educational entertainment government industrial military | museum park private residence religious scientific transportation other: |
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| 5. Lo | cation of | Leya | i Desc | or their | | |
| courthouse, | , registry of deeds, etc. | Montgon | ery County | Court H | louse | |
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| 6. Re | presentat | ion i | n Exis | ting | Surveys | |
| title | LaMott Survey | has this property been determined elegible? yes $-\frac{X}{}$ no | | | | |
| date | 1984-5 | | | · | federal X | state county local |
| depository f | for survey records | Pennsylv | ania Histor | ical and | Museum Commission | n |
| city, town | Harrisburg | | | | sta | te Pennsylvania |

7. Description

| Condition | Check one _x unaltered altered | Check one X_ original site moved date | N/A |
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Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Village of LaMott, located in Cheltenham Township, is an urban style residential enclave located within a suburban area of Montgomery County. Edward M. Davis, son-in-law of noted abolitionist Lucretia Mott gave over a portion of his vast land holdings for the establishment of a village in which integrated living was encouraged.

Davis moved to the farmland of Cheltenham Township in the 1850's and soon after established a real estate company which began the process of acquiring large tracts of land for speculative development. Davis's real estate efforts were temporarily suspended during the Civil War, when he and his mother—in law, both believers in Quaker tenets, engaged in abolitionist activities. During this time he donated a portion of his property for use as the first camp for training black troops.

At the close of the Civil War, Davis resumed his real estate activities, selling large tracts of land to wealthy Philadelphia entrepreneurs seeking an escape from the urban bustle. However, Davis' real estate activities were not all financially motivated. Following the Quaker belief in racial harmony, Davis set aside thirty acres, established a pattern of streets and created small building lots to be sold to black and white purchasers.

The development of the village of LaMott is an interesting amalgam of speculative real estate practices popular in urban and suburban residential enclaves created in the late ninteenth and early twentieth centuries. LaMott was not planned in the sense of one real estate company controlling the land and developing the property from a set plan of growth. While Davis started from a similar point, owning the tract and taking responsibility for creating the framework for the community — cutting the major streets and creating the building lots, he sold off some of the unimproved parcels to other small development interests.

The form of growth which ensued was more in keeping with urban and suburban development patterns from the mid-nineteenth century. In the village of LaMott, several individuals owned and developed the properties, with the most prominent of the entrepreneurs helping to support the infrastructure. These amenities were viewed as critical in encouraging people to purchase and settle in a new residential area. In this instance Davis gave the land for the community's first school and church.

Architecturally, LaMott is a combination of styles, forms and building materials which describe the village's development from the post Civil War years through the early part of the twentieth century. While the markings of architectural styles are clearly seen on many of the buildings, the term "vernacular" must be used owing to the significantly pared down version of each building. For the most part the buildings are modest in size and scale, although it should be noted, many of the properties rest on rather large lots of ground.

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The first residence constructed in LaMott, pre-dates the creation of the village as a formal residential setting. Edward M. Davis constructed a brick and stucco structure, in 1854, located at the corner of Willow and Butcher Streets, for his tenant farmer William Butcher. Butcher, the area's first black resident purchased the property from Davis in 1879. Simple in plan and design, the building displays a minimum of detailing with a steeply pitched gable roof.

The first speculatively built houses, within the district, are six wood frame structures located on Keenan Street. Built by local developer Thomas Keenan, beginning in 1869, these buildings are reported to be constructed of wood salvaged from the demolished barracks of the black encampment. Two stories in height with a low pitched roof, all of the structures remain standing, although the original frame has been covered by a variety of finishes.

Several examples of the Carpenter Gothic style, interpreted in the Victorian mode may been seen through out the community. Rising 2 1/2 stories, these structures constructed of brick and wood display the distinctive pedimented gable front. In many instances the original wood porches remain intact, with turned wood posts and decorative brackets and rails. 7329-31 Keenan Street retains its porch detailing intact with delicate fan motifs resting within the bracketed eave. At the end of Keenan Street is a charming Gothic Revival cottage complete with an ornately scalloped bargeboard. Constructed circa 1882, many of the earlier styles of architecture appeared within the village, long after their original period of popularity. In addition to porch detailing decorative cornice work is used to highlight the otherwise simple designs. 1813-15 Willow Street uses a pleasing mix of cornice relief and porch detailing to enhance these utilitarian "shot gun" style houses.

The 1880's and 1890's represented the most significant period of growth as, bulk of the remaining lots were built upon. Development, however continued into the twentieth century with Philadelphia style, brick rows and single family, Dutch Colonial structures appearing in the built environment.

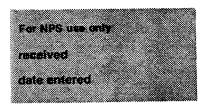
The village's institutional buildings are more sophisticated in detailing, as would be found in public structures. The first school, now home to the LaMott Free Library and community center, was constructed in 1878. Designed in the Italianate mode, the building was constructed in a random course local stone and enhanced with stone lintels. A delicate, arched head window with tracery is a compliment to the segmented head sash, on the lower floor. The steeply pitched roof is off-set by the simple bargeboard and exposed eave. Rising from the center is a wood cupola. The firehouse, also constructed of local stone with a decorative cupola, is reminiscent of the school house in appearance although built in 1915. The local AME church, an impressive brick and stone structure, is the second house of worship in LaMott. The first church, constructed on property donated by Edward Davis, was destroyed by fire and the present edifice

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constructed on the site in 1911. Constructed of brick, the front portion of the building, including the tower is clad with local stone. Gothic tracery, stained glass windows detail the side elevations.

The village of LaMott, a small enclave with quiet, tree shaded streets, line with a pleasing mix of vernacular style residences, is a largely intact example of post-Civil War residential development.

8. Significance

| Period prehistoric 1400–1499 1500–1599 1600–1699 1700–1799 1800–1899 1900– | Areas of Significance—C archeology-prehistoric archeology-historic agriculture architecture art commerce communications | heck and justify below X community planning — conservation — economics — education — engineering — exploration/settlemer — industry — invention | law literature military music nt philosophy politics/gove | rehitecture religion science sculpture social/ humanitarian theater ernment transportation other (specify) black history |
|--|---|---|---|--|
| Specific dates | 1850-1935 | Builder/Architect N | Ione | |

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

SUMMARY STATEMENT

The village of LaMott, located in Cheltenham Township, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, stands as an important landmark in American black history. As one of the first communities in the country to embrace integrated living, the village represents a turning point in the social and racial development of residential enclaves in the post-Civil War era. Situated on a portion of the site of the nation's first training camp for the Third Regiment of the U.S. Colored Troops (1863-1865), LaMott saw the participation of both blacks and whites in the development of this suburban residential community.

Much of the credit for the creation of this community is given to Lucretia Mott, noted Quaker abolitionist and suffragette, whose beliefs in racial harmony and equality were well known to the proponents of the anti-slavery movement While Mrs. Mott served as a spiritual leader, it was her son-in-law Edward M. Davis who was responsible for much of the physical development of the community. Davis, also a member of the Society of Friends, was a major landholder and real estate entrepreneur in Cheltenham Township. Shortly after the Civil War, Davis subdivided 30 acres of his land, cut streets and created small building lots available to both black and white purchasers. While the first purchasers were Irish immigrants, blacks soon began to acquire lots and build houses. From this the village of LaMott was born. Integration within a residential setting, even in the more enlightened northern industrial cities, was virtually unheard of in the nineteenth century, making Davis' willingness to provide blacks and whites with an equal opportunity to purchase land progressive and enlightened in its foundations.

This tradition of racial harmony, reflects the egalitarian beliefs of the architects of this unique community. Named in honor of one of the community's most influential proponents, the Village of LaMott has created a rich heritage and standard for living which continues today.

EARLY HISTORY

When Edward M. Davis arrived in Cheltenham Township, in 1850, the area was comprised primarily of large Quaker farms, mills and country estates. Davis, a real estate entrepreneur joined his brother—in—law, Thomas Mott and his family, at Oak Farm, a vast estate located along Old York Road in Montgomery County. Like his mother—in—law, Lucretia Mott, Davis embraced Quaker tenets, and was an ardent abolitionist of the Garrisonian school, participating in the Anti-Slavery Society and Non-Resistance Movement. The abolitionist philosophy of tolerance and equality among the races carried over into Davis' business concerns, forming part of the ideological foundations of his future real estate development plans. An astute businessman, Davis foresaw the future value of land in this rich, rural area, and in 1854, formed a land company for the purchase

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and development of real estate in Cheltenham Township. In its first year of operation, Davis' company, the Chelten Hills Association, purchased 1,000 acres of farmland, and sold off large parcels to such wealthy Philadelphia entrepreneurs and merchants as Jay Cooke and John Wanamaker.

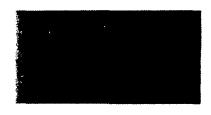
In addition to these efforts, Davis divided 30 acres of his own farm into three parcels (Map A). The first of these tracts, a twelve acre lot south of Willow Avenue, extending westward from what is now Butcher Street to Sycamore Avenue, was sold in 1854 to Thomas Mellor, who retained its as an investment property. The parcel was then re-sold in 1865 to James Corr and William McNulty. The second parcel, situated between Penrose and Sycamore Avenues, bounded on the north and south by Beech and Willow Avenues, consisting of 12 acres, was sold to Samuel Mason in 1854. Six years later Davis sold off the remaining parcel, a tract east of Butcher Street, between Cheltenham and Willow Avenues, to Francis Morgan, gentleman. Davis' initial development efforts, in the years before the Civil War, were not specifically directed towards the creation of an integrated community. Rather, these activities focused more on the practical business of real estate development.

In 1857, Lucretia Mott and her husband James joined their family at Oak Farm. The elder Mott's retired to ROADSIDE, an old farmhouse and caretaker's residence on the grounds of the farm. While their city residence, at 338 Arch Street, had been a center for the Anti-Slavery Movement in Philadelphia, the site of numerous meetings and rallies, this country home provided a quieter lifestyle for the couple. Nevertheless, Mrs. Mott remained quite active in the abolitionist movement, opening Roadside to slaves traveling the underground railroad enroute to freedom in Canada. She and son-in-law Edward M. Davis, as well as many of their Quaker neighbors were strong supporters of the Union Army cause during the Civil War. In 1862 Davis formed a Cheltenham branch of the Union League, and raised funds for the publication of Union propaganda.

Cheltenham became the focus of national attention in 1863 when it was chosen as the site of the country's first recruiting and training camp for black soldiers. While, historically, blacks had served in times of war, Section 2 of the Militia Act of July 17, 1862 was the first federal law which enabled the president to call black soldiers to military service. Shortly thereafter, Camp William Penn, the first installation designed to train black volunteers was established. Initially located along Church Road, on the property of fellow abolitionist and Civil War financier Jay Cooke, the camp moved to more level ground within three months time. Davis donated the new site, a large parcel west of Sycamore Avenue (Map B). Extending northward from Cheltenham Avenue to just above Willow Avenue, the property provided ample space for barracks, officers quarters, stables and extensive cleaning, kitchen and repair facilities.

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Cheltenham's proximity to the city, and more importantly to the North Pennsylvania Railroad depot, undoubtedly influenced the site choice. Modern historians point to Philadelphia's generally strong anti-black sentiments as another possible factor influencing selection of a site beyond the city limits.

In direct contrast to Philadelphia, Cheltenham readily embraced the black recruits. Its Quaker and abolitionist residents offered the young men friendship, and moral support conducting Bible classes and sermons on the campgrounds and providing accommodations for visiting families. Lucretia Mott, then 70 years of age, delivered numerous inspirational speeches and sermons to the men; entertaining the officers at her home. Through these activities, Mrs. Mott became the unofficial spiritual leader to the black troops stationed at Camp William Penn.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE VILLAGE OF LAMOTT

At the close of the Civil War, Edward Davis resumed his real estate development activities, acquiring additional parcels adjoining his already vast holdings. By 1867 he had re-purchased most of the 30 acres sold off before the war and began to develop this area for residential construction A tract of land between the present School House Lane and Keenan Street, bounded by Willow Avenue and Cheltenham Avenue, was the first area divided into 50 lots, which Davis sold for between \$ 150 and \$ 250 each. The first purchaser were white working class families, predominantly Irish immigrants.

Previously, designated simply as the Chelten Hills region of Cheltenham Township, the burgeoning village was first known as Camptown. In an effort to encourage the sale of lots within the village, Davis offered to construct and operate a school for local children on a site below Willow Avenue, on what would later be called School Lane. The Cheltenham School District rented and later purchased this building from Davis.

Edward Davis was not the only real estate entrepreneur working in the area in the early years of its growth. Thomas Keenan, an enterprising local carpenter, purchased a two acre parcel, east of Sycamore Avenue from James Corr in 1866, Keenan divided the tract into 6 lots, beginning construction of six wood frame houses in 1869. These structures, constructed from salvaged wood from the black encampment were located on a new street named for Keenan. Developing slowly, the parcels sold over a fifteen year period spanning from 1869 to 1884.

BLACK DEVELOPMENT IN LAMOTT

History records William C. Butcher as the first black settler in LaMott. Edward Davis hired the native Virginian, in 1854, as the tenant farmer for Oak Farm. As part of their employment arrangement, Davis constructed a stone house at the

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corner of Willow and Butcher Streets for Butcher and his family. It is unknown whether there were other blacks working on area farms during these early years, however, given the enlightened beliefs of the Quakers it seems likely Mr. Butcher was not the only black migrating from the south to work for Quaker landowners.

In point of fact, Census records for 1860 report some fifteen blacks living throughout Cheltenham Township, working as laborers, domestics, coachmen, waiters, or housekeepers. What remains uncertain is their exact place of residence, as no specific designation of village or address is given. Regardless, it was not until the end of the Civil War that blacks began to assert a strong identity in LaMott. Attracted to the area by increasing employment opportunities, and an atmosphere of racial tolerance, blacks found work on the grand estates being built by such wealthy entrepreneurs as William Elkins, P.A.B. Widener, John Wanamaker, and others.

In the first decades of the area's growth, few black settlers owned property. Rather they rented houses in the village or lived on their employers' estates. George Henry, a coal hod carrier, is recorded as the first black landowner in the village, purchasing a lot on School Lane in 1868. Among other first generation black landowners were William Bowser, a laborer, who resided on School Lane, and William Triplett, purchaser of one of Thomas Keenan's houses on Keenan Street. Successive generations of Tripletts and Bowsers resided in LaMott, through to the present day.

Once established in the community, black residents took a leading role in its development, among them brickmaker William Watson. Among the first black landowners, Watson purchased a tract of land along Cheltenham Avenue from carpenter Christian Albrecht, in 1869. Operating a brick yard from his property, Watson is attributed with the manufacture of bricks for at least four houses along the north side of Willow Avenue between B-D Street and Sycamore Avenue. In 1879, longtime resident William Butcher finally purchased the stone house he had rented from Edward M. Davis, as well as several adjacent properties. Butcher then rented out the latter, becoming in effect, the first major black real estate investor in LaMott.

Population statistics compiled from Census materials provide a useful overview of LaMott in the 1870's and '80's, recording an increase in both black and Irish populations for this period. Although Camptown, or LaMott, was not individually designated in Censuses before 1880, earlier records document overall growth trends in Cheltenham, and note the continued prevalence of such occupations as domestics and farm laborers among these groups. By 1880, LaMott's black population totalled some 22 persons, an impressive figure given a total of only

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15 blacks throughout all Cheltenham only twenty years earlier. By comparison, LaMott's Irish residents numbered 101, accounting for approximately half the total village population of 206 persons. Domestics and farm laborers do not appear among occupations for either black or Irish in LaMott, suggesting some independence from neighboring estates by this time. The majority of black and Irish residents listed in 1880 Census records worked as laborers. The steady rise in the black population in LaMott, and Cheltenham, paralleled, on a smaller scale, the steady increase of blacks in Philadelphia. As thousands of freed slaves migrated to the northern industrial states, Philadelphia's population swelled from 25,000 to over 50,000 by the close of the century. such black settlement in Montgomery County is not unique unto itself, given these population statistics. However, what makes LaMott development so unusual was the continued influx of Irish immigrants in the post Civil War years, creating a defacto integrated community. As noted historian Charles Blockson would later suggest, the pattern of integrated settlement in LaMott proved somewhat of a social phenomenon, given the history of racial strife between blacks and Irish only seven miles away in the City of Philadelphia.

Building activity continued at a rapid pace, resulting in the opening of additional land for development between Willow and Beech Avenues west of Sycamore. The community's infrastructure proved insufficient following this steady burst of development. LaMott's original schoolhouse was unable to support the growing community, necessitating the construction of a new building. A lot was purchased at the corner of Sycamore and Willow Streets, and the present stone school building erected in 1878. Within two years an addition was required to accommodate the continually growing student population Edward M. Davis continued to play an important role in the community's development during this period, donating property at the corner of School Lane and Cheltenham Avenue for the construction of a community church. Deed to the property, transferred at a cost of one dollar, was paid by William Butcher. The original church, replaced by the present A.M.E. edifice, was completed in 1888.

The name LaMott was officially adopted in 1885, when the village received its first post office. The existence of another Camptown in the state required the creation of a new name, much to the disappointment of residents wishing to retain ties with the demolished training camp. As a fitting alternative, they selected a contraction of the name Lucretia Mott, long considered a heroine of the black man's cause among local citizens.

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LAMOTT IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

The turn of the century ushered in an exciting period of growth and modernization in LaMott. Improvements to municipal services were among the most noticeable physical changes to LaMott in the early years of the new century. Streets were paved and water mains laid, with the financial assistance of Cheltenham philanthropist George Widener. Following in rapid succession was the establishment of a LaMott telephone exchange, street lights, police patrol services and gas mains. These improvements to the infrastructure enabled the village of LaMott to maintain a distinct identity both in terms of physical character and racial composition, from the greater portion of Cheltenham's rapidly growing community.

A leading force behind much of the community's development in this period was black resident William A. Ritchie. The butler for local millionaire George Elkins, Ritchie moved to LaMott in the 1890's, purchasing a house on School Lane. A man of unusual ambition and energy, Ritchie immersed himself in the affairs of the small community. He organized the Fairview Cemetery Company in 1907, serving as its first president. Ten years later, Ritchie helped organize the LaMott Building and Loan Association, designed to encourage black ownership of homes and businesses. Buying up numerous properties in LaMott, Ritchie and partner James Burley aided prospective black homeowners or businessmen in the purchase of property. By sub-dividing large lots along Sycamore Avenue and Keenan and Butcher Street into small, inexpensive properties, the LaMott Building and Loan Association helped more than twenty black families purchase homes, and assisted in the establishment of four black-owned businesses. Ritchie also established a partnership with carpenter John Haskins to build houses within LaMott.

Standing alongside Ritchie were such noted twentieth century civic leaders as William Anderson and Aubrey Bowser. Anderson distinguished himself, locally, as the first black policeman in Cheltenham, receiving that post in 1915. Bowser, won a scholarship to Harvard University with the encouragement and assistance of his benefactor and employer, John Wanamaker. A descendant of William Bowser, one of LaMott's earliest black landowners, Aubrey Bowser, went on to become a judge, achieving national prominence as one of the founding members of the NAACP.

The uniqueness of LaMott's community developmental patterns extended beyond racial bounds to also traverse socio-economic lines. In addition to striking a critical racial balance between blacks and Irish in the growth of the community, the black settlers in LaMott maintained a strong bond with the wealthy white community also residing in Cheltenham Township. Immediately adjacent to the village is one of the wealthiest bastions of late nineteenth and early

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twentieth century suburban residential development, Latham Park. Created in 1912, on a portion of the old Davis estate, this community was populated by such noted industrialists and entrepreneurs as Jay Cooke, P.A.B. Widener and his partner William Elkins. Just as the occupants of the nineteenth century estates had maintained strong ties with the black community in LaMott, this newly established community continued the tradition of integrated living. Although this relationship might, on the surface, appear to have been proprietary, owing to the number of blacks who worked in the houses of their affluent neighbors, the basis for their interaction stemmed more from common attitudes concerning blacks and white developing a means of peaceful co-existence. Despite sharply contrasting lifestyles, Latham Park and LaMott maintained a bond of cooperation and friendship, owing to the enlightened attitudes of the Quaker entrepreneurs living adjacent to the village. Local histories recall the relationship between such noted men as John Wanamaker and P.A.B Widener and the black community in LaMott, and their philanthropic activities on behalf of its residents.

The concept of integrated living, in the United States, is often thought of as a phenomenon which has come about only in the past 35 years. However, the village of LaMott is an unusual example of a nineteenth century community in which both blacks and whites lived together. Created, in large measure from the enlightened teachings and beliefs of noted Quaker Lucretia Mott and her son—in—law Edward M. Davis, from the inception of the village, blacks and whites found the opportunity to own and develop properties. The community developmental history of LaMott chronicals the early efforts to create an enclave in which blacks and whites resided in harmony. In this climate, the community flourished establishing a pattern of living which continues through today. As a long standing testament to this unique community, generations of locally prominent families such as the Bowser's, Triplett's, Butcher's and Granly's have lived worked and prospered in the Village of LaMott.

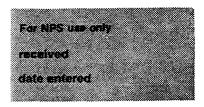
9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE ATTACHED SHEET

| 10. Geograph | ical Data | | | |
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| 11. Form Prep | pared By | | | |
| name/title Elizabeth R. Min | ıtz | | | |
| organization ELIZABETH R. MIN | | d | ate June 13 | , 1985 |
| 301 Cherry St | | te | elephone (215) 59 | 92-0465 |
| Philadelphia city or town | | s | tate Pa | |
| | toric Prese | rvation | Officer C | ertification |
| The evaluated significance of th | is property within the st | ate is: | | |
| national | | X_ local | | |
| As the designated State Historic 665), I hereby nominate this proaccording to the criteria and pro | perty for inclusion in the | National Register | and certify that it ha | s been evaluated |
| State Historic Preservation Office | er signature | | | |
| title Dr.Larry E. Tise, St | ate Historic Preserv | vation Officer | date | |
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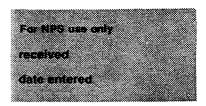
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MAPS

Map of Montgomery County, William E. Morris., 1848.

- Map of Township of Oxford-Boroughs of Frankford & Bridesburg, Bristol, Northern Liberties, and Cheltenham Townships, M. Dripps, 1849, Philadelphia.
- Map of Bucks & Montgomery County and Philadelphia, Wagner & McGuigan, Lithographers, Philadelphia.
- 1871 Atlas of Montgomery County, G.M. Hopkins & Co., Philadelphia.
- 1877 Atlas of Montgomery County, J.D. Scott & Co.
- 1897, 1909, 1916, 1927 Ward Atlases, Cheltenham, Abington, Montgomery County, A.H. Mueller & Co.

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet LaMott Historic District

Item number

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Page

Verbal Boundary Description:

Beginning at a point on the southern corner of Graham Lane and Penrose Avenue moving east along southern side of Graham Lane for 1250 feet to the western corner of Sycamore Ave. and Graham Lane; then south along the west side of Sycamore Avenue for 250 feet to the western corner of Sycamore Ave. and Willow Ave.; then east along south side of Willow Ave for 1000 feet to east side property line of 1444 Willow Avenue and along rear of properties facing west on to School Lane for 550 feet to northside of Cheltenham Avenue; then west along northside of Cheltenham Avenue for 1250 feet to rear of properties facing east on to Sycamore Ave.; then NE along rear of properties to northside of Willow Avenue for 500 feet; then west along soutside of Willow Ave for 1000 feet to east side of Penrose Ave; then NE along eastside of Penrose Avenue for 800 feet to point of beginning.

